

# Life & Times

## Margaret Hammond:

an appreciation



Margaret Hammond holding a copy of *The Practice Library*. Image obtained by kind permission of the archivist.

**Born 9 March 1935; died 24 April 2019**

The RCGP was very fortunate with its first Librarian, Margaret Hammond, who was appointed in 1963 at the age of 28. She had qualified as a medical librarian at St Bartholomew's and Guy's hospital, and she joined the staff when the College was only 11 years old. She had a challenging job. While the College journal had just been recognised by *Index Medicus*, the literature of general practice was rudimentary and expectations were generally low.

The College leadership backed her by installing her in the library in a spacious room on the first floor of 14 Princes Gate, in Kensington, London, where it became a prominent focus of learning and scholarship as the College grew. Margaret worked in this room where she provided an unfailing welcome to all comers. She took great trouble and many early articles by College members acknowledged her help and support. She obtained grants from the Royal Society and the Usher Institute in Edinburgh, and offered members and researchers up-to-date lists of general practice publications. By 1967 this became *New Reading in General Practice* and 3000 were sent to trainers.

In a pre-computer world she card-indexed all known GP publications. She also steadily built up the biggest collection of doctoral theses in general practice in the world, which is available now in the College and which has inspired many colleagues.

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and advised the editor. When a history of the first 40 years of the College was requested at short notice,<sup>2</sup> Margaret threw herself into support, sending information and references almost daily for weeks, which one of us (DPG) greatly appreciated. When computers arrived, Margaret added many records to the new system.

In 1988 she was awarded a Stuart Fellowship to provide guidance on setting up a library in general practice and she wrote *The Practice Library*. A print run of 10 000 proved inadequate and a further 10 000 copies were printed. Margaret visited many general practices, especially those of GP trainers, and gave much practical

*The Library at 14 Princes Gate. Image obtained by kind permission of the archivist.*



Margaret Hammond. Image obtained by kind permission of the archivist.

advice and consistent encouragement. It is interesting to compare this academic activity in general practices then and now.

She retired in 1995 after 32 years in the College and was elected an honorary FRCGP. A videoed interview with her and Alastair Donald was recorded in 1996 (filmed by William Fulton as an oral history of the College, archive classification code C-AV-CI-10).

She later served for several years on the Heritage Committee. She was a great pioneer and a dedicated librarian. She actively and systematically promoted the literature of general practice to members and colleagues nationally and internationally. She set an inspiring example to those who worked with her, as one of us (BB) did. She died in London on 24 April 2019, aged 84.

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